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The AUTHORITY and PERSON
 of OUR LORD
 JOHN A. HUTTON



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BY

JOHN A. HUTTON, M.A.



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INTRODUCTORY

THE NATURE OF CHRIST'S AUTHORITY

“ . . . I judge no man,
And yet if I judge, my judgment is true, for
I am not alone, but I and the Father
that sent me.”

S. JOHN viii: 15, 16.

THE NATURE OF CHRIST'S AUTHORITY

WHEREVER Jesus Christ has won a place for Himself, it has soon or late come to be the Highest place. Wherever He has come to be really known, He has come to be acknowledged as the supreme authority for man in things pertaining to God. In human societies where Jesus has really entered as a Force and Spirit, men may continue to order their lives in ways which He does not approve; but if such men have really become aware of Christ, they are not able—except by doing violence to certain delicate but fundamental susceptibilities—to rid themselves of a haunting accusation and moral uneasiness. If they know, however imperfectly, that they are behaving contrary to the mind of Christ, they may still go on as though they were at peace with themselves. But they

are not at peace with themselves: they are at war with themselves. They may try to free themselves of the private shadow, they may surround themselves with gaiety, they may assure themselves that it is all right; but they know all the time that it is all wrong, that they are only acting a very difficult part and with poor success; they know that they are not behaving honourably by certain obscure and indomitable voices of their personality,—so long as they are not living in harmony with the mind of Jesus Christ as they know it. They may sit down to life as to a feast, but nothing has its true taste and relish for them so long as they know that there is One, Jesus Christ, whom they cannot honestly ask to sit down with them. And because of the averted Face of that Son of Man, they know that they are not at home, that they are not living naturally and candidly, that they are avoiding an entire world of reality within which and through

which, as they suspect, a man comes unto God, if he can come unto God at all.

Now all this is from one point of view, the Authority, the Deity of Jesus Christ. Wherever He has really come to be known, He has, inevitably, by virtue of His own Quality, won even from His enemies, indeed always first from His enemies, the name that is above every name. Entering on the scene, in any community of people, or in any individual heart, as the Son of Man, as a real and truly human Personality, Jesus, with the consent of some, under the execration of others, but always by the indomitable Force and Excellence of His own Person, has moved up to the place of God, and is seated now on the right hand of God in all the heavenly places. That is simply indisputable—wherever He has come to be known, He has sooner or later become merged in God: so that men, as a matter of fact, can no longer conceive of God without seeing Jesus

only in a halo of glory, and can no longer conceive of Jesus except as the Incarnation, the Fulfilment, the Expression in conditions of time and space, of that Intending Will which is coming to itself in the universe of human souls—which we name and adore as God.

James Martineau, to whom the Christian thought of the last two generations owes so much, although on grounds of pure reason (as he believed) he could not give to Jesus Christ the name and place which the Universal Church has given Him, was compelled to make, and did make without reserve, concessions with regard to Christ, which, I think, ought to have carried him nearer to the orthodox view of His nature than he allowed himself to go. For example, he was ready to confess that there was nothing in the essential nature of Christ which conflicted with the purest conception of God. Contending as he did for the Unity of the Godhead, he had at the same

time to admit that the only *Unity*, the only *One* whom he and all others were worshipping, was not an abstract Deity,—synonym for the immense and unspeakable Good—but was simply Jesus Christ, with His essential features exalted into infinity; that the actual presence of God in and over this world is now inextricably mingled with the Christ of history and of faith, that if we do not know God in Christ, then we do not know Him at all.

Now that is how the Christian confession with regard to Christ is beginning to be stated, and what is of more consequence, is beginning to be embraced and believed by our living hearts. We are beginning to free ourselves from the *bondage* of the Confessions, in order that we may come under a new and happy bondage to the great claim on behalf of Jesus Christ which all the Confessions made and which they sought to defend from the criticism of their various days.

And that living truth, that unfaltering assertion concerning Christ, is this—that for beings such as we are and placed as we are, Jesus Christ, to use a dominant word in the theology of our time, *has the value of God*. He is God, He is the Supreme One, the Decisive Spiritual Personality, the moral Judge of the whole earth. Whatever conflicts with Jesus Christ in our attitude, conflicts with God and does violence to our spiritual nature. And whatever is in harmony with Jesus Christ is even now in harmony with and promotes our human blessedness, and is in eventual harmony with the nature of things, with the Holy and Incorruptible Will which is in all and through all and over all, God blessed for ever.

2. Now Jesus throughout His ministry, and most serenely in its darkest days, foresaw that it would be just as it has come to pass. That He would be seated at the right Hand of God. That He would build up and cast down. That

He would be the Judge of the whole earth. That nations would be established which honoured Him; that nations which repudiated Him would thereby let loose forces which would make them desolate. That men would fall asleep in death quietly and with hope, or uneasily and without hope, according as, knowing Him, they had given themselves by faith to Him, and to that cause of God in the world for which He had lived and died.

Let the world explain this moral uniqueness of Jesus Christ as it may, it cannot deny the fact of it. Men may not accept Christ as the Master of their Soul. They may dispute His claim,—although, strictly speaking, Christ made *no* claim. But if they have really come to know Him, they can disregard Him only with a certain secret trouble in their hearts, or with a certain violence and passion, such as a man shows who is determined to do something which all the time he knows to be wrong,

and so he first smashes something within himself or blows out a light within his soul—a candle of the Lord—which, though feeble, was nevertheless a barrier.

3. Again and again, while Jesus was on earth, men questioned Him as to His authority: but He would never answer them directly. If men approached Him in the spirit of controversy, He did nothing to help them. It was only when people, one by one, and for overwhelming reasons of their own, were prepared to give Him the highest name, the divine Name, that He assured them that in so doing they had not been deceived. But whenever men, partly hostile, partly merely curious and trifling, came to Jesus, and asked Him for His authority, He for the most part gave them no answer, or He said something which showed them that they were only trifling. The only authority which Jesus claimed was the authority which the person himself at that mo-

ment was prepared to grant Him. When men asked, "Who art Thou?", He answered for the most part, "Whom say ye that I am?" It was as though He had said, "Am I anything to you? Have I any influence with you? Do I rebuke any evil spirit within you? Do I check some passion, or cool some fever of the blood? Do I make it harder for you to do wrong? Do I make it easier for you to do right?—Then, in that case, I am so far God to you, I am so far the Saviour for you. Act loyally by that appreciation of me which you yourself have formed. Let it take you as far as it would like to take you. Be obedient to whatever I have become for you. While ye have light, believe in the light, and walk in it. Do not put yourself off by raising metaphysical questions. Do I impress you as the Way and the Truth and the Life? Do I help you on towards what is best, or towards what at least is better than your practice hitherto?

Then, once again I am for you, at your present stage, God, God absolute because God personal and immediate. I am He with whom you have to do."

In short, Christ's dealings did not properly begin in any human heart until somehow, as the result of some kind of pressure, that heart had become engaged, touched, excited, stung to life, to misgiving, to tenderness, by something already acknowledged in Christ. At that point in the career of a man, Jesus would have said to him, "Do not raise questions about my authority, about my nature. Simply obey that interior guidance, that vision of the true life which has come to you from me, and you will be led on to firmer ground." As one might say on being asked the way to the top of a mountain: "having struck a footpath on the mountain-side which plainly leads upwards, follow it, looking around indeed, but not expecting from the outset to see everything. Be

content to follow on, and whenever you come to a point where two ways offer, take you the high way. At times you may see nothing for mist and cloud, and you may know that you are rising only by the strain and difficulty of your progress. Be faithful unto the end: that is your part. It is God's part to cause a wind to come and cleanse the sky."

4. On one occasion Jesus was asked directly and with the purpose of entangling Him, to say what was His authority and who had given it to Him. The incident is related by all three Synoptists. He replied by putting a question to His questioners. The question which He put to them was this: "The baptism of John, was it from heaven or of men?" "And," we read, "they reasoned with themselves, if we say from heaven, He will say why then did ye not believe him? And if we say from men, we fear the people, for all men count John a prophet. So they answered: We cannot tell.

And He said, Neither tell I you by what authority I do these things."

Now that incident enforces two things which are to be kept in mind. Here were men who had been impressed by Christ. They felt that He had authority. They felt that somehow He had the right—for He had the power—to interfere with their personal lives. Instead of acting upon that fact, and yielding to Christ's influence over them so far as it would take them, they were really seeking for some pretext for getting away from the fascination of Christ. Had Jesus said plainly, "I am the Son of God," that would have been enough for them. It would have served their turn exactly. They would have said, preposterous, blasphemous, as indeed they did say later. And that would have served to come between them and the living appeal of Jesus which they, a moment before, could not gainsay. They would have escaped from a

certain moral obligation by raising a dust about a matter on the abstract or intellectual plane.

And so Jesus virtually said, "I am that I am": as though He had said: your business with any holy influence which is inviting you, is not to question it, not to try to get behind it, but to act upon it.

And the second thing which we see in the incident and must always remember when we are dealing with the authority of Jesus Christ, is this, that there is no further vision of God, no further apprehension of Christ to those who are not meanwhile obedient to that true call of Christ which they themselves acknowledge in the region of personal life and conduct. Here were men who on their own showing had not yet made up their minds whether it was a man's duty to speak the truth, presuming, nevertheless, to raise a question involving the true nature of God!

5. We conclude: Christ's authority is Himself, His moral beauty and perfection. His authority is that Power of God which inheres in the purely Good for those who see it. His authority comes from a certain indestructible correspondence between what He is, and what we, who were made in the image of God, in spite of all things, are. His authority is to be discerned in that Summons and invitation and reinforcement which we find in Him, to our complex nature, body, soul, spirit, reason, imagination, desire, will. This is His authority: on this He is ready to *begin* His Revelation of Himself to us one by one—the appeal of His own moral Excellence, the new Confidence in God and in the high meaning of our life which comes to us because of His Faith.

For “He died, the just for the unjust to bring us to God,” to take us (as I believe the idea really is) into the presence of God and to leave us there, to let us see God in such a

way as to lead us to seek Him out of every possible form of human impotence and despair.

6. You have, it seems to me, the Evangelical statement of Christ's authority, and you see it from the New Testament point of view in a drawing of Dante Gabriel Rossetti which I can recall.

In it we see Mary Magdalene in her unhappy, unwise days passing down a street, wild, unkempt, excited,—when, looking up, she sees a serious but kind Face, looking at her through an open window. It is the Face of Jesus Christ. And immediately, as she looked, something was struck dead within her, and something came to life; seven devils were cast out, and from that hour she lived a pure sweet life, in devotion to Him who had saved her.

There you have the Unconquerable Power of Christ. This is what shall secure the Supreme Place for Him so long as man has to feel and urge his difficult way through life—

this, that Jesus, in virtue of what He is, has the power to speak to us one by one, to call us by name, by His very silence and love to deliver us from the dominion of baser things, and set us on our feet again. *We have seen what we have seen, and we can never be as though we had not seen it.* We have seen Christ, and "that One Face, far from vanish, rather grows!"

As Marius lay dying (in Walter Pater's great biography), he finds himself, with that incurable spirit of analysis, trying to bring under one category the many lines of influence which Jesus Christ was plainly exerting upon the world, and, before death comes, he perceives that "in Jesus Christ, there has been established in this world a permanent protest, a plea, a perpetual afterthought which humanity will ever possess in reserve, against any wholly mean or mechanical theory of itself and its conditions."

LECTURE I

THE VOICE OF THE NEW TESTAMENT
CONCERNING THE PERSON OF OUR
LORD JESUS CHRIST

THE VOICE OF THE NEW TESTAMENT
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LORD JESUS CHRIST

WE hear it said on all hands to-day—so very frequently, indeed, that we are probably right to suspect that it is no genuine conviction of our age, but simply a fashion, a word which suits a very great number of people—we hear it said on all sides to-day that people have no interest in the doctrinal statement of Christianity. That what they want—from their teachers and preachers—is guidance, inspiration, sympathy, advice. And this is declared to be a sign that the situation for faith is improving, as though this impatience with dogma marked a profounder insight into the meaning of Christ. But, apart from the fact that what must decide our practice is not simply what people

want, but what God has considered needful for us all,—apart from that—I do not believe that people go to church for such things chiefly as sympathy and advice. Or rather; I do not believe that people would go to church at all for such things if they did not at the same time assume that the Church had more to give, that she possessed a holier treasure and profounder Word. Who wants mere *advice* in the deepest hours of his life? Who wants to be told merely how to walk, how to avoid this thing and make for that thing, in those hours when one is not sure that there is any use in walking further, or in making for anything? A man whose soul has become agitated and solitary by reason of some tremendous misgiving as to his own moral condition, or as to the whole meaning of life, has meanwhile no ear for religious small-talk; and will not attend, because he cannot, until the agitation of his heart, the distress at the centre

of his being, has been composed by some *faith*, by some *belief*, by something which is objectively true—true, i.e., in itself—concerning life and death, concerning everything. So long as men have to face and to live with their own unhappy memories, so long as men die,—the light of life seeming to go out irrevocably in the lonely night, so long will men,—men at their best, at their truest,—ask for something more than mere advice. They will ask for that which lies behind all advisings, that which gives advice any value it may come to have. They will ask for truth, for revelation, for a word from God, a word about Himself, and about us, why we are here, and whither bound, and how we may read the signs.

For we live by our faith. Our faith is our working theory of life. Now the Christian faith in one view is that Conception of God and the world which comes to us in Jesus Christ. It claims to rest upon certain facts

of history. The Christian faith, i.e., is not simply a mood of the soul which the long and painful experience of mankind has found to be safest, and most becoming for us. The Christian faith is built upon the intrusion into our world of Jesus Christ, who was and is the Revelation in history of the true God. In the words from the Epistle of S. Paul to the Philippians, which I desire you to have in mind, is the following: "Christ Jesus Himself of the form and essential nature of God, took upon Himself our flesh and lived, being the Son of God, among men. He willingly suffered death for our sakes, but God raised Him from the dead, and restored Him to His seat and place of power in heaven." That is the tremendous assertion and claim of the Christian faith:—we believe in God Almighty and in Jesus Christ, His only-begotten Son, who was and is in the bosom of God from all Eternity.

And now there are one or two things which,

it may be, need to be said here on the threshold before we enter upon our study. The first is that once for all we must be on our guard against the sin of supposing that what God desires of any of us is the mere intellectual acceptance of any statement with regard to Him. Christian belief is only to a limited extent a thing of the head. Yes; let even the pledged servants of Jesus Christ beware of the awful snare of setting mere correctness of theological opinion above personal holiness. I shall say nothing more upon that. The Bible is full of warnings. The New Testament is full of warnings. Our Lord in many a parable put His own grave emphasis upon it—the danger of exalting the Confession of the lips above the private obedience of the heart, of holding the truth in unrighteousness.

The other thing which I wish to say on the threshold is, that the whole-hearted acceptance of Christ's exalted nature is not a mat-

ter upon which the mere external evidence is sufficient. Here as everywhere in the region of faith, the evidence never reaches the point of being overwhelming or coercive. The evidence takes you so far, but only so far. At the last, it is always "by faith" that you understand. The evidence is overwhelming only for those who by the secret desire of their hearts, by the total cry of their being, are waiting for that very disclosure from the side of God which Christ so gloriously is. Here as elsewhere, and as in all great transactions of the Soul, you must take a leap in the dark,* you must at a certain stage "let go," surrender, leap in the line of the external evidence, though beyond it; but the happy assurance which rises within you, once you have given yourself up

* Rather, *In the light*. Cf. "Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you."—"While ye have light believe in the light," also, "Arise, shine; for thy light is come and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee."

without reserve, must be held to be proof that now you are upon the very ground which God all the while was meaning you to take. In short, the thing that makes faith faith, involving secret, private qualities, is that it needs something more than external evidence—in a word, it needs the working together of a holy Pressure upon our hearts which disposes us to give the evidence its most radiant and blessed Significance. As the Scripture puts it, anticipating a thousand books and magazine articles on the subject of the relations between faith and reason,—“no man can say that Jesus is the Christ but by the Holy Ghost.”

But though the personal confession concerning Christ as true Son of God, and Eternally in God, requires something more than external evidence, though it requires a certain spiritual discernment which enables us to give the proper weight to the evidence, nevertheless there is evidence, and it is not apart from the evidence

—not apart from the facts and events and the history—that the Holy Spirit has, first and last, enlightened the Souls of men concerning Jesus Christ our Lord. There is the danger in our own day that the Christian religion may come to be conceived by even Christian people as only a vague, undefined pietism, a mood of the human soul that has sinned or suffered. On the contrary, the Christian faith had a definite beginning. There was a day when it began to be. Something took place on this earth of ours, something so unique, so significant, as to awaken the heart of the world and to place us all within hearing of a new and deathless appeal from the side of God. In the last analysis Christianity is not an affair of psychology, but of history. It is not a mood of the human spirit, but a fact—The Fact of Jesus Christ.

And now let us proceed.

“A great man,” it has been said, “con-

demns the world to the task of explaining him." That is to say, we cannot but think of a great man who has lived and has spoken, and is gone. We mean by "a great man" one particularly who has been great in the Spiritual side of his nature. We mean a man of vision, who speaks a new word from God, a word intelligible to us now that it has been spoken, a word concerning the depths and the silences of our mysterious and unrealized life. Henceforth we must see the whole of life through that man's eyes; or we must have reason for refusing so to see it. If he is a true prophet of the Invisible God, and if we have really heard his voice, we fall under his authority and cannot disregard him even though his word conflicts with our own habits and worldly interests. We must either confute him and so be done with him, or we must accept him and live on the bread from heaven which he has brought to us, or—most miserable of human

conditions—we must go on our old ways as though we had not heard the Call of God in him, in a horrible uneasiness and want of honour—for we know that there is some One knocking at our door and we are simply pretending that we do not hear.

Thus a truly great and original man cannot be allowed simply to come and go. He comes and goes away, but he comes back again to our unforgetting heart in a spiritual and abiding form. And by the force of an instinct with which God has endowed our reasonable nature, we cannot but proceed to have our thoughts about One who wields such power over our spirits. We cannot but move on and arrive at doctrines concerning what must lie at the back of his so penetrating influence, and this process in certain elect minds may work backwards and upwards and inwards until it comes to rest in a coherent body of doctrines concerning God and man and all things.

It was in this way (we may believe) that doctrines concerning the Person of our Lord were first arrived at, and accepted by His first disciples. Those doctrines were serious endeavours to account for One who had exercised such an Influence over their own lives. Jesus had encountered those men as they were engaged in their daily work. He had spoken to them about God and about themselves. His words had a power, a force and background such as they had never been aware of, who first heard Him speak. And more: the very Presence of Jesus had a cleansing influence upon them. A man felt his secret breaking away from him, when Jesus stood before him, as in the case of Peter, who once upon a time when Christ appeared before him suddenly, cried out uneasily, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." In short, certain men and women who had companied with Jesus, who had seen Him live, had been so impressed

by Him that, when He went away, they understood and boldly affirmed that, in their view, He was none other than the very Son of God. In their view, this tremendous idea, that in Jesus Christ, we have the definite and literal intrusion and appearance of God in human conditions, this tremendous idea was the blessed and only satisfactory explanation of the total impression which Jesus first and last had made upon them.

And there is still no other valid and honest interpretation of the events of the New Testament.

1. In the first place, it is surely beyond all doubt that the Apostles and the Christians of the first century regarded Jesus as Divine, as true Son of God. But it might be objected, as has been alleged once again and quite recently in certain quarters, "man as man is the child of God, man as man bears within him

the image, concealed and marred it may be, of his Heavenly Father. To say, therefore, that Jesus is the Son of God may only mean, even in the mouth of an Apostle, that Jesus is merely man, first indeed and most perfect of the race, but still only one of ourselves." To that line of argument, I think it is enough to say that the Apostles and the first Christians were plain people, who used words in their natural and obvious sense. If they had intended to say that Jesus was one of themselves, however distinguished, it would have been a very simple thing for them to say it. But if proof be still required that, in the habitual view of the Apostles and of the primitive Church, Jesus was different from all others, not in degree only, but in kind (as we say), not only in attainment, but in the very nature of His Being, here is a fair and simple test. Try to read a chapter of any Epistle, and wherever you come upon the name

of Christ, try to understand the Apostle as attributing to Christ only a human rank, however exalted. Try such an exercise and abide by the result, abide by your own instinctive and natural feelings on the whole experiment. You will find such expressions as these, and you will find them occurring, never with any self-consciousness as though the writer was putting a strain upon the spiritual allegiance of his readers, but always with entire naturalness in the manner of one who is making use of language which is understood by his readers and accepted by them in his sense. You will find, I say, such expressions as these: "To us there is One God, the Father, of whom are all things and we unto Him; and One Lord Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and we through Him." (1 Corin. viii. 6.) Or this: "Giving thanks unto the Father . . . who hath delivered us from the power of darkness and hath translated us into the Kingdom of the

Son of His Love, in whom we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins, who is the Image of the Invisible God, the first-born of every Creature. For by Him were all things created that are in heaven and that are in the earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers; all things were created by Him and for Him; and He is before all things and by Him all things consist." (Col. i. 12-16.) Or in the great passage in the Epistle to the Philippians: "Christ Jesus, who pre-existed in the form of God, but humbled Himself to death; wherefore also God highly exalted Him and gave unto Him the name that is above every name, that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven and things on earth, and things under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father."

I ask you, can you conceive such expressions being applied even to the most transcendent example of human worth and excellence?

But further, almost every Epistle opens and closes with a prayer addressed to God and to Jesus Christ as on the same plane of being: "Grace to you and peace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ."

Further still, the formula for Baptism which is acknowledged by the most searching criticism to be a primitive expression of the Apostolic ritual, ascribes to Jesus Christ with the Father and the Holy Ghost, a place in the Eternal Godhead: Christians were baptised into the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost. Now in this great matter there is not even a shade of difference in the tone of one New Testament writer from the tone of every other. I think that is a very notable point. We know, especially from the Galatian Epistle and from the Book of Acts,

perhaps also from the Epistle of S. James, that on one or two matters—such as the place of the Ceremonial Law in the New Dispensation—the Apostles were seriously and even passionately divided in opinion; but not even the most unfriendly ear has detected a discordant note in that spontaneous and lyrical outpouring of their hearts with regard to Christ—in which the one thing that we always feel is that they know they cannot go too far or far enough, and that having said all that they have said, their words still fall short.

S. John writes: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. By Him all things came to be, and without Him did not anything come to be that has come to be.” And, he continues, putting the reference beyond all doubt: “The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only-

begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth;" . . . and concludes, "no man hath seen God at any time, the only-begotten Son which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him."

The second Epistle of S. Peter is so unmistakable as to speak of "the righteousness of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ," as though, in the writer's view, there was no dividing line between Christ and God.

S. James, although his motive in writing his Epistle was not theological, but moral and practical, nevertheless ascribes to Jesus Christ, as it were by the way and instinctively, the rank and attribute of Deity: "James, a servant of God and the Lord Jesus Christ," and once again—"the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of Glory."

Testimony of this kind, conclusive as it is in itself as to the voice of the Apostolic circle concerning Jesus, acquires additional value for

us when we recall that the Apostles who thus bear witness were *Jews*.* Paul, Peter, James, John,—had the hereditary instincts and the religious training of the Jews of their day. And what was the outstanding feature of that religion? What was its very characteristic? Was it not the sense which pervaded it, of the Ineffable Holiness, the Eternal Aloofness (so to say) of God? What is the Great Thought which moulds the entire Hebrew ritual,—that ritual which prescribes that only One out of a Consecrated people, and he only after washings and fastings, and even then with prayer and in fear, shall enter—and that once in a

* All who have lived where races meet know how inveterate is a Race-Prejudice. Well there was a Race-Prejudice which had to be overcome before any one of the Apostles could say concerning Christ what they did all say. Their doctrine of Christ was never one to which they could have gradually arrived—as the result, I mean, of the play of memory. It must have come to them bearing down the obstacles of *centuries*, with a crash of proof such as there was no withstanding.

year—into the Holy of Holies? What is it that the Hebrew conscience is trying there to express? It is the Unapproachable Sanctity of the Being with whom we have to do. For remember that, to the Jew, the Holy of Holies which could be entered so rarely and only with such scrupulosity, was but the vestibule into the very Presence of God, was but the Place where God vouchsafed to appear not in reality, but in a Symbol. Yet even into such a Place, once only in a long year, one cleansed man of a whole nation might enter, and he with soft and trembling foot. And not even to him was the very God made manifest. There in that innermost solitude burned, indeed, the Shekinah Light which bore witness that God was present, though Invisible. But it was away beyond, in a region far removed from symbols, in the midst of unapproachable Sanctities, girded about with light inaccessible, the devout Jew conceived God Himself to be.

Why,—in those very days when the Apostles were speaking of Jesus Christ as in the bosom of God, in those same days the very name of Jehovah was held in such reverence that it might not be pronounced by mortal lips. When in the public reading of his ancient Scriptures he came upon the word Jehovah, the Jew was either silent or he used another word—Adonai.

Now, remembering such things, I would have you face the invincible fact of the New Testament, that the Apostles—who were Jews—with one voice proclaimed Jesus Christ the Son of God from all eternity. In the midst of that light which encircled Jehovah as with flaming swords, they dare to believe that Jesus Christ has gone, for in such a place they conceived He had been world without end. S. Paul had not forgotten the inviolable Sanctity of God's place when he seemed to see Jesus there. No, rather he was remembering it:

“Keep this Commandment without spot unrebukable until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ . . . who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of Kings, and Lord of Lords, who only hath Immortality, dwelling in the Light which no man can approach unto, whom no eye hath seen or can see, to whom be honour and Power everlasting.” (1 Tim. vi. 15, 16.)

Whatever, then, the world may make of it, it is simply not to be disputed or qualified that the Apostles believed and taught and the Apostolic community accepted that Apprehension of the Person of Jesus Christ which we mean when we call Him the true and only-begotten Son of God, not to be separated in our thought or in the outgoing of our hearts from Him “who is in all and through all, and over all, God blessed for ever.”

2. And now consider for a moment that the witness which these men bore to Christ had the immediate effect of involving them in persecutions and in separations from their kindred, and in apparent hostility to their country. To believe in Jesus Christ in the days when S. Paul believed was to become an outcast from society, was to be reckoned a traitor to one's own country and an apostate from God. To believe in Jesus Christ at that time or at any time for the next three hundred years, was to put oneself in a minority, was to have the proud, unscrupulous world against one, was to take upon oneself the risk of punishments and death.

Surely it is the only natural and reasonable explanation of what had happened, to suppose, that when the belief in Christ's Divine Rank was first embraced, it was embraced because it had been borne into the hearts of a certain number of people with such a force

of evidence that for them it was only a question of accepting the doctrine with all the perils it involved, or of trampling upon the evidence, thus giving over their souls to the tormentors. "Necessity is laid upon me," said S. Paul, "yea, woe is me if I preach not the Gospel." There is no explanation of the eleventh chapter of the Second Corinthian Epistle, where Paul pours out his extraordinary story of perils by sea and land, down to his being let over the wall of Damascus in a basket—there is no natural or sufficient explanation of that, except the explanation offered in the ninth chapter of the Acts which tells us that once upon a time Paul, a Jew with the prejudices of a Jew and the theology of a Jew, was drawing near to that same Damascus with a heart hot with disbelief and hatred, when something felled him to the ground, and he heard the withstanding voice of the Exalted Christ.

3. There is a way of looking at this whole matter which has always had great force for myself, giving the Apostolic testimony concerning Christ a certain freshness. I can state it in this way. We know, who know anything about the life of the Soul, how we shrink from saying anything that would unsettle the religious beliefs of other people, how we are often willing rather to permit something to remain which we may consider as of no value or as even needing correction, lest by our intruding we should disturb some delicate root of spiritual life. Probably our Lord had this also in His view when He gave the Parable of the Wheat and the Tares: "let them grow together." Nevertheless the Apostles appealed to Jew and Greek alike to break away from their religious traditions and to yield themselves up to Jesus Christ as unto God. Think of that and remember that they knew and continually declared that what a man believes, de-

cides what he is in this world, and what he shall be as an immortal soul eternally! In asking their fellows to believe in Jesus Christ the Son of God and to commit themselves to Him in life and death, the Apostles became responsible for all who should obey them in their own age and in all ages. And the Apostles were well aware of this immense responsibility. An immense responsibility, indeed, it has become, for, as a simple matter of fact, Jesus Christ has now taken His seat at the right hand of the Majesty of God. There is no serious rival to-day to that manifestation of God which the world received in Christ. There are masses of men, alas! who deny all reality to the things of faith and of the Spirit, for whom there is no Heavenly throne, or if there is such a throne, it is vacant. But wherever there is to-day a living belief in God, wherever the faith still breathes that a Divine Will, a Divine Heart throbs at the source of all things, wherever

God is honoured, it is the God and Father of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Wherever it is acknowledged that the throne of Heaven is occupied at all, it is occupied by none other than Jesus Christ. He is the only God of the Western world. Either men deny God outright, or the God whom they adore or seek is a God penetrated by Jesus Christ. Think of Christ long and steadfastly, and God in His Majesty or God in His Pity—according to your inward condition—draws near. Or try to think of God—of a God whom you can know at all,—and whom do you see but Jesus Christ with no longer a Crown of thorns, but encircled in an Amazing Light of which He is at once the Emanation and the Source?

4. There are, to conclude this stage of the matter, two possibilities remaining, which, if either of them could be made out, might affect

the value for us of the Apostolic testimony concerning Christ.

(a) The first is this. If it could be shown that the Apostles had a narrow or limited notion of God, of what He must be to be at all, then, although *they* conceived that Jesus was the Son of God, it might be that we, because we have a loftier conception of Deity, could not accept their testimony or adopt their inference. But it is surely enough to reply that, as we have already said, the Apostles were Hebrews by birth and training. The thought of God was not less, but more majestic, more lonely and awful to them than to us. We simply have not the faculty for the Sublime which labours and adores in Prophecy and Psalm. They felt the crushing majesty of the silent heavens; the level sea, the cloud-girt mountain made their souls ache and shrink, more keenly it may be than ours, with

thoughts of infinite space and infinite time. They knew that if God is, He is greater than nature and able to take up all things in the Hollow of His hand. S. Paul speaks to the Romans as any serious thinker—if he were likewise a devout man—might speak to-day: “that which may be known of God is manifest in men, for God hath shewn it unto them. For the invisible things of God from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal Power and Godhead.” Or what wider thought of God’s Being could be expressed than that which S. Paul discloses to the Athenians: “Whom ye ignorantly worship, Him declare I unto you. God made heaven and earth . . . and in Him we live and move and have our being”? But the Apostles had not only a due sense of God’s Almightyness; they conceived Him always as Personal to every man, as brooding over every human Soul.

The New Testament sense of the holiness of God may be measured by the rigour of its sense of man's sin. God as the Apostles conceived Him is the Holy One before whom the holiest of men must stand abashed.

It was not, then, because they had themselves only a meagre and unworthy sense of the Majesty and Holiness of God that they found little difficulty in clothing Jesus with the Attributes of Deity. No, it must, on the contrary, have been that they felt the Majesty and Holiness of Christ to be such,—so transcendent, so manifestly not-of-this-world—that they could not, in loyalty to the facts, hinder Him from ascending to the right hand of God.

(b) The second possibility which, if it could be made out, might weaken for us the value of the Apostolic testimony to the Person of Christ is this: perhaps the Apostles had such a poor conception of *man*, of what he is, of the

capacity and reach of his nature, that when One like Jesus appeared amongst them, with His confessedly pure and beautiful Soul, He seemed to go beyond the bounds of the merely human, and in a kind of panic of appreciation they hailed Him as the Incarnate Son of God.

But the Apostles knew very well how high the human spirit might soar. They knew that the human soul could drink in the Spirit of God until the whole man was transformed and his very face shone with the exaltation. For, once more, the Apostles were Hebrews. They could look back across the centuries and see Saint after Saint, peak overtopping peak towards the last horizon where earth touched heaven. Moses was theirs, and him they saw in the halo of a pious and patriotic memory. They saw him in the glory of his setting when the Hand of God carried him so that men saw his face no more. And Jeremiah was theirs, with his breaking heart, and Isaiah with

his visions. And the Daniel of the story was theirs, with his innocence and his strength in God. And besides all these, the Apostles might well know of what heights and depths the human soul was capable; for they knew the Psalms. They knew how man can cry out for God; how likewise he can rejoice in God in the midst of ruin and sing songs of praise in the very pitch of night. The Apostles knew quite well what a piece of work a man is, and what infinite and tremendous faculties lie coiled within him like a spring ready to break out at the proper summons. Jesus Christ could not have startled them into a mistake. They had read of human excellence such as they had not been privileged to see. But what they saw and felt in Jesus Christ must have been more and other than all that. For, as we have seen, they hailed Him as the Son of God; they prayed to Him. and since they were Hebrews and believed that only God could be

worshipped, they thereby confessed that Christ was not to be separated from God in the outgoings of our spirit. Knowing all the heroes of the Old Testament, the notable saints of their history, they yet gave to Jesus Christ, the name which is above every name.

“ And I saw in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, a Lamb standing as though it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent forth into all the earth. And He came and He taketh it out of the right hand of Him that sat on the throne. And when He had taken the book, the four living creatures and the four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having each one a harp and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of saints. And they sang a new song saying, Worthy art Thou to take the book and to open the Seals thereof: for Thou wast slain, and didst

purchase unto God with Thy blood men of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, and madest them to be unto our God a kingdom and priests, and they reign upon the earth. And I saw and I heard a voice of many angels round about the throne, and the living creatures, and the elders, and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands; saying with a great voice, Worthy is the Lamb that hath been slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honour and glory and blessing. And every created thing which is in the heaven and on the earth and under the earth and in the sea and all things that are in them heard I say: Unto Him that sitteth on the throne and unto the Lamb, be the blessing and the honour and the glory and the dominion for ever and ever. And the four living creatures said Amen. And the elders fell down and worshipped."

LECTURE II

THE VOICE OF THE NEW TESTAMENT
CONCERNING THE PERSON OF OUR
LORD JESUS CHRIST

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CONCERNING THE PERSON OF OUR
LORD JESUS CHRIST

IN our last lecture on the Person of our Lord we passed under review some points in the testimony of the Apostles. We saw that they unanimously and, as a matter of course, used language concerning Christ, such as they, who were Hebrews, knew was suitable only in regard to the Divine Being. They prayed to Him, and in His name. In the formula of baptism, they adored Him with God the Father and the Holy Ghost. In asking all men, nay, in pleading with all men to adopt their belief, the Apostles must have been aware of the immense responsibility which they were assuming. They themselves held that it was no light matter what a man believed concerning God; and they must have known that

it would be no light matter for themselves if they had taught men to believe a blasphemy concerning God. The awful alternatives which S. Paul held before his own eyes with regard to the Resurrection, hung by the same necessity on the question of the true Nature of Jesus Christ: "If Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain. Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God, because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ, whom He raised not up if so be that the dead rise not. For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised. And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain, ye are yet in your sins. Then *they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished.*" [There you have the sudden sense of his responsibility for those who through his word have believed.] "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable." But the burden of all that we said in the preceding

paper was, that the Apostles believed in Jesus Christ as a Divine Being hardly to be separated from God in thought, not to be separated at all in prayer and adoration; and this, in consequence of evidence, in consequence of facts to them so commanding, so overwhelming, that they simply could not withstand the facts, or turn the edge and challenge of the evidence. Necessity was laid upon them to preach the Gospel of Christ. We proceed then to ask,—what was this evidence which they could not gainsay?

Here, at the outset, however, it might be a good thing to raise a more general question and to inquire, whether external evidence, the evidence of facts and events, can of itself produce the attitude of assent and love in any one who has merely witnessed them; I mean without a certain previous preparation and instruction of the heart. When we put the same

question in another form, we see at once what the answer must be. If it be asked, will every one be convinced of the Divine Rank of Jesus Christ who has had the Evidence laid before him, we must reply, "Every one will not be convinced." And we have only to come a little more closely to the whole matter, hovering for a moment on the margin of the abyss of "subject-and-object" to understand that this necessity for something more than mere external evidence is a necessity of thought, which operates in every region of knowledge. We have the proverb that "seeing is believing;" and it is a very common remark that a man's view is determined by his point of view. There is the man to whom

"A primrose by the river's brim
A yellow primrose was to him,
And it was nothing more."

And there is another kind of man to whom
"the meanest flower that blows can give

thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears."

"Flower in the crannied wall,
I pluck you out of the crannies!
I hold you here, root and all, in my hand,
Little flower! But if I could understand,
What you are, root and all, and all in all,
I should know what God and man is."

Before any fact or body of facts can have such weight with us that we shall yield to their holiest or most beautiful significance, before indeed they can have any value as evidence, we must have sympathy with them; we must be conscious of that within ourselves, an appetite, a hunger, a dream, of which the facts supply a possible satisfaction or defence. The last and finest interpretation of facts must always depend upon the inclination of the soul, upon a man's own private vote. In short, it is the soul, the man himself, the desire and will of the observer which gives to external facts, events, theories, their peculiar force. It is the

spirit of a man which is the candle of the Lord. Nay, the deepest statement of the case is to put it in still other words of the Holy Scriptures: "there is a spirit in man, but the inspiration of the Lord giveth him *understanding*." That is all to say, that the truth about a fact or about a body of facts is always personal; it is always revealed in me. My soul summons the very truth out of the heart of the facts. It is something already within me which lights up the facts, or it is something within me which makes them dark and secular. Knowledge is appreciation. If this be true of our knowledge of another life, it is more strictly true of any real knowledge of the Exalted Person of the Lord Jesus Christ. A bad man cannot really understand a good man: as Satan for all his cleverness did not really understand Job, because he did not understand the ways of a good man. It is the pure in heart who see God. The true knowledge of a Person is

communion of Spirit with him, and so the Apostle moved right up to the end of this whole matter when he wrote, "No man can say that Jesus is the Lord but by the Holy Ghost."

Any attempt, therefore, to see the Glory of Christ and to feel His Power must begin in the suppliant attitude, in prayer. For Christ is not our equal, upon any hypothesis, upon any serious interpretation of Him. He is our Saviour who must be trusted before He can be known and loved. We know that many people saw Jesus live who did not confess His Divinity or His Lordship over their souls. Many admitted His miraculous powers and His moral authority in certain moments, who did not feel compelled to let go their last reluctance and throw in their lot with Him for life and death. And what happened at the first happens now. We must go to the Gospel story seeking for ourselves light and pardon and strength from God, before we shall see such

graces in the face of Jesus Christ. We must turn to Christ in some lonely hour, when some crisis has delivered us from the hard crust of our ordinary thoughts, and has shown us in a flash our own forlorn and insecure position; we must go to Christ in an hour when for some reason our heart and flesh is crying out, before we are in a position to say what, in the matter of Deity, Christ is, and whether there is anything in the matter of Deity that He is not. For the Divinity of Jesus Christ was a Discovery of the Soul before it became a Doctrine of the Church: and that is still the sound and beautiful order.

We know how, as a matter of history, the Holy Spirit fell upon the disciples and those who had companied with Jesus before they were persuaded that He who had been with them and had gone away was none other than the Son of God. When the Presence and

Power of God was upon them, they knew it was still the Presence and Power of Christ. In that deep hour, when for the first time they knew *God* personally, they knew that Christ was in the bosom of God. It was not until Pentecost that the followers of Jesus saw the halo round the Head where but lately the thorns had been.

We, too, must be under the Spirit of God, conscious of the mystery of God, conscious of a burden or a grief or a shame, of something that shakes us to our centre,—we must feel God near and personal to ourselves, with nothing between Him and our souls; otherwise we have not yet had the spiritual discipline which alone gives a man the seeing eye for the Glory of Jesus Christ.

But although it was the illumination of Pentecost which persuaded the disciples of the Glory and Godhead of Christ, they could recall His earthly life and find now reason upon

reason for their new faith. *Their belief had its basis in facts and in a history.* The Spirit, as, indeed, Jesus had promised, testified of Him, and called to their remembrance His words and deeds. And so it is for ourselves; though nothing but spiritual sympathy will lead any one to see the Divinity of our Lord, yet His earthly life, and His own consciousness disclose things which can only mean that Jesus is not to be ranked as, in His nature, a mere son of mortal man. We *have* evidence, though only God can persuade any one, and although one may never be persuaded until under the power of some profound distress, or tenderness of heart, he cries unto Christ as unto God, and finds in the peace of the answer the proof of his wisdom, the corroboration of his faith. In short, we can give reasons; only God can give to men an understanding.

We say, then, there is Evidence. S. Paul,

speaking before Festus, said of the life of Jesus, "The King knoweth these things before whom also I speak freely: for I am persuaded that none of these things are hidden from him: *for this thing was not done in a corner.*" That is to say, there were circumstances about the life of Jesus which no one, not even an enemy, could gainsay.

It would lead us further than I have time to go, to consider with thoroughness the Evidence of our Lord's nature from the narrative of His life and ministry, which we have in the Gospels. But it is well worth recalling at this point, that the testimony to the Exalted Nature of Christ was felt by the Apostolic and Sub-Apostolic communities to be so overwhelming and masterful, that for the first three centuries it was not His Divine Nature which was denied. The successors of the Apostles and the Apostles themselves had to contend for the Real Human Nature of our Lord; because, for

those who first read the Gospels, for those, also, who first came within the stir and glory of His mighty working in their own hearts and in the world, the difficulty was to believe, not that Jesus was Divine, but that He was, in any sense, Human! The Church in her high doctrine of Christ's Person recognises and defends the final mysteriousness of it, affirming on the one hand, that Jesus our Master was truly man, yet at the same time claiming that no word shall be said in any final sense about Jesus, no definition shall be placed upon Him, as though it included all that is ever to be said about Him. The Church, in her high doctrine of Christ, claims that, though truly man, nothing shall ever be accepted as giving the whole truth about Him which could have the effect of separating Him (even by an *iota*) from the Everlasting Spirit, who is at the heart of all things, on whose Inviolable Will hang all our hopes and fears.

(a) We cannot read those Gospels without feeling that He whom they portray was truly man. We read that Jesus thirsted; that He hungered. A long journey wearied Him, as it would one of ourselves. And not only did He share our human body, "partaking of our flesh;" He had a human mind and heart. He felt things in a way that we all understand. Before the grave of Lazarus, He shed tears. He had His human friendships. He was angry with the anger of a righteous man. There were moments when He chose rather not to be alone, when He asked, it might be three of His disciples, or four of them, to accompany Him, and to be near Him, while He faced something in His own solitary Soul. His voice could take on the note of pity, or of sorrow, or of disappointment, as, on the other hand, His whole being could thrill with gratitude, with happiness, with victory, as when He rejoiced in the faith of the Centurion, or when, after the in-

cident at the well, He turned to the disciples and said, "The fields are white to harvest;" or when, hearing that men from afar had come to seek Him, He raised His eyes to heaven and said, "Father, the hour is come." And life with its tasks, its ebb and flow of fortunate and contrary circumstances, its care for others, life with all its work of faith and labour of love and patience of hope had its effect upon Him likewise, making Him look older than He was, for the Pharisees thought Him about fifty when He was only thirty-three. As the last days drew near we never lose sight of the true man in the travail of His Soul. We read that in the Garden, "He was greatly amazed and sore troubled." He confessed that "His Soul was exceeding sorrowful, even unto death."

Remembering all these things, we feel indubitably that in the case of Jesus Christ, whatever more or other is to be said, we are in the

presence of true humanity. And yet, if we decide to call Him *man*, with the purpose of defining, i.e., limiting, His Personality, immediately, out of the same narratives arise a multitude of recollections, hints, words, silences, deeds, impressions, and a general sense of wonder, which compel us to withdraw the name, and to leave an open door for Jesus to enter, if our heart decrees it, into the very Godhead. For, when we think again, we feel just as indisputably that He whom those Gospels portray is not one of us. Even when He uses words which others have used, they are different, coming from Him. They have a different authority and background.

I stood, one morning, by the shore of an island in the Orkney group. The waves that broke at my feet had behind them the undistracted might of the Atlantic. It was a shore of white sand and shells and pebbles. Over

these one trod carelessly, for at every step it was the same. But suddenly I stood still, for my eye had fallen upon a shell which, lying amongst the others, was yet a stranger to all its fellows. There it lay, with a tone, a colour, which separated it from the surrounding grey-ness. I stooped to gaze and peer at its unwonted texture and grain, and these only increased the sense which had come to me with the wonder of its colouring, that it was a stranger to those cold and formidable shores. And as I mused, the fire burned. I remembered that I was standing on a shore which from all time has been washed by a generous flood. The Gulf Stream passes that way, and once in passing it had cast the shell upon that dreary waste of rock and sand. The Gulf Stream, pouring eternally from the Golden Sea, had borne it from afar, and cast it where it lay—to make one man here and there stand still on the journey of his life, and consider

it, and dream of its homeland under a clearer Sun beyond the seas. Just so did the outgoing heart of God, that Eternal tide of love, bear Him to us, casting Him upon this bank and shoal of time, to break the weary tyranny of things, the curse of fate and custom and iron law; to urge one here and there to pause upon his way and consider, and in one brave ejaculation make the great and blessed Inference of Faith.

(b) To return: you observe that, throughout His earthly life, Jesus was quite well aware that He was different from all other men. He claimed to be apart, and acted always with a certain aloofness. He never put Himself on a level with even His closest disciples. Never even in the moments when they were nearest to one another, did Jesus suggest or allow them to suppose that He and they were in one case. He does not speak in their hearing of God as

“*our* Father.” The words He uses are, “When ye pray, say ye our Father.” Speaking of God in relation to Himself, and to them, He says, with a kind of care and precision: “My Father and your Father; My God and your God.” He claims,—without pausing to defend the claim,—to be greater than Solomon, greater than Jonah, greater than the Temple. Yet is He acknowledged to have been the humblest, the meekest Soul that ever breathed our air. We feel no surprise at all when we hear Him make such claims. It is all quite natural, quite in harmony with the inexhaustible worth of His Person. In the mouth of even the saintliest of men, it would disquiet us to hear such claims put forward. As Jesus makes such claims, there is something in us, something far within, which is *not* astonished.

This consciousness that He was different from all men appears likewise in the moral

authority which He claimed and which He wielded:—the very authority which He wields to-day beyond all serious dispute. From the first Jesus ascended the throne of the human conscience, and it is simply the fact that to this day, wherever Jesus Christ has been preached or manifested, wherever He has secured any place at all, it has sooner or later become the highest place. To this day the human conscience which has once come within sight of Jesus Christ can never again be as though it had not seen Him. To this day no man can be at peace with God, having the comfort of his own thoughts, if meanwhile he is at war with Jesus Christ in any particular of his life, even down to the least movement of his imagination. To this hour, no man dares to say that Jesus Christ has not the right to dictate to *him* how he shall order his life! And in these matters, what is happening now must have happened before, and

will happen again and again, even unto the end.

Jesus could say to the men with whom He took to do in His earthly ministry, "Ye have heard that it hath been said of them of old, Thou shalt not kill, thou shalt not commit adultery, thou shalt not steal, but I say unto you . . ." He could assume that tone, and every conscience felt His searching claim as though, in dealing with Christ, it was dealing with its Judge. Even His enemies confessed that "no man ever spake like this."

But it was not only in regard to matters of detail in moral practice that Jesus assumed the right to issue *ultimatums* from which there might be no appeal. He demanded from all who would follow Him an utter consecration, an absolute surrender. He knew what, in the way of suffering, devotion to Him would involve: yet He did not hesitate to ask it. "Ye shall be persecuted, pursued from city to city;"

“the time cometh when they that destroy you will think that they are doing God service.” But, notwithstanding all that, He insisted that they who *would* should follow Him. “Let a man forsake all that he hath, and take up his cross and follow Me.” So conscious was Jesus of His own identity with the living heart of all life, so identified was He in His own thought with God and God’s destiny for man, that He could say, “If any man come to me and hate not his father and mother and wife and children and brethren and sisters, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple.” These words, mark you, from Him who created the home as we know it, who also has spoken the sternest words against those who in any age would loosen or do violence to its sacred bonds. Now, no one but God has the right to claim absolute and unconditional faith. In making such a claim for Himself, Jesus assumed the prerogative of God.

It is at this point that we can best allude to that one fact in the self-consciousness of Jesus which separates Him from all mere men, even from the saintliest: I mean His sinlessness. Jesus had no sense of moral failure. Remorse never visited Him, or regret for anything He had ever done. In the deepest prayers that broke from His heart, in those awful searchings of His own Soul which we are permitted to overhear in Gethsemane and on the Cross, there is no cry of penitence, or for pardon. He looked into His own heart, and nothing in His memory had the power to give Him pain. He could say, "I do always the Will of my Father." Let us think of that, remembering at the same time this,—that the holier we ourselves become, the more sensitive do we grow to the approach of sin.

Remember this, also, which I can call to your minds by an illustration. Perhaps you have at some time been left in a room alone

with a truly saintly person. Immediately you feel your distance in spirit from him. Without intending it in the least, his goodness passes judgment upon you. It seems to yourself that every word you speak betrays you. You are like one speaking to a stranger in his language. Even when you use the correct words, there is an accent, a want of ease which betrays you. So, in the presence of an entirely good man, in the presence of one who is quite done with self-seeking, you feel awkward, and, as it were, a burden to yourself. There are two courses open to you as you stand in the holy presence of a fellow-man, and you are tempted now to take one course and now the other, and it will depend upon certain deep and final things in yourself and in him, which course you would *most* like to take; (1) you would like to rush out of the room, or (2) you would like to bury your head upon his breast! But my point is,—the presence of a holy one

passes judgment upon you, and covers you with a secret trouble and impotence, if you are spiritually on a lower level. Now, Jesus Christ, by the admission of every serious mind, lived not in the presence of a holy man, but in the Presence of the Absolutely Good, in the presence of God. He was always alone with God. Yet in that Searching Presence, in that consuming Fire, under that unbroken "*judgment of Light*," He felt no discomfort, no heart-breaking distance between His own personal achievement and the Supreme Holiness: felt only the Friendliness, the Comradeship, the Identity with Himself of pure Deity.

Now, we say, going back to the self-consciousness of Jesus, as we are recommended to do in order to have our views of Christ's personality readjusted, we say, here is a Person not to be explained as a man, not to be classed alongside any one who had gone before, or should come after Him. If Jesus Christ is to

be explained at all in these most characteristic depths and reaches of His Personality, then we are not qualified, unaided, to explain Him. The best we can do is to say that He is not one of us. St. Augustine we know, Dante we know, Shakespeare we know—in certain circumstances, as Charles Lamb said, “If we had *the* mind to”—we might have been any one of them, for wherever they have gone in thought and imagination, *we have it in us to follow them*. Were they to come into this room just now, as the same Charles Lamb once put it, we should stand up to receive them; but if Jesus Christ, if He, who could see God and not die, but live, were to come in, we should kneel down, acknowledging that here our restless spirit of analysis and criticism stood face to face with something Absolute, Inexplicable, and only to be adored. If Jesus is to be explained, He must explain Himself. A man can only be judged by his peers, and Jesus Christ

has had no peer. "I think I know men," said Napoleon, "and this was no man."

Still, keeping close to the self-consciousness of Jesus, one would like to speak with greater fulness than is possible now, of *our Lord's Knowledge of the Future*, of His unfaltering Confidence that, now that He had come into the world, man would never be able to withstand His Rebuke and Invitation, would never be able to confuse beyond recognition that Meaning and Calling of life which He had uttered and bequeathed. It was an element in the Mind of Christ, that He had taken His place for ever in the leading and control of man's destiny. When a woman crept to His feet and anointed them with spikenard, Jesus said, "Verily, I say unto you, wheresoever this Gospel shall be preached throughout the world, this also that she hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her." Shortly before His death He said, "I, if I be lifted up

from the earth, will draw all men unto me.” On the very night before His death, not despair, but an extraordinary confidence, filled His Soul. He instituted the Supper and ordained it as a Sacrament, in which, through all the ages, His disciples should dedicate themselves anew to Him, in which also they should receive strength and peace from His Presence in their midst. And just before He left this earth, He ordained—with no hint of doubt or foreboding in His anticipations—that the nations throughout the world should be baptized into His name, as into the Name of the Father, and of the Holy Ghost.

Finally, under the head of the self-consciousness of Jesus, He claimed to be the End of History, and the Judge both of the Living and of the Dead. He spoke calmly and with the sense of an awful reality and certainty in His words, of a day when the Son of Man should suddenly come and bring human existence to

an end: "The Son of Man shall come in the Glory of His Father, with His Angels, and then shall He render unto every man according to his deeds."

Who is He, who alone can He be, who speaks in such ways, who holds Himself with such a fundamental aloofness, that though He gives Himself even unto death for man, man has always acknowledged not only His supremacy, but His difference?

That question was one which the first Apostles and the first body of believers had to ask themselves, and in the glory and thrill of their own fresh experiences, to answer. I recall a sentence from our first lecture: "A great man condemns the world to the task of explaining him." It was simply inevitable that a doctrine of Christ's Rank and Person should be formed as soon as the disciples had had time to reflect upon the marvellous One

who had visited their lives, and had left them now as to His bodily Presence. Jesus was the most powerful personality whom they had yet encountered. He had made the deepest appeal to them. He had demanded obedience from them, and this not so much by His words as simply by His own natural authority. Never once, not even in the darkest hours, did it occur to the disciples that Jesus had asked more from them than He had the right to ask. And so, it was not in human nature that the disciples should close their minds and think no more of this One who had so distinguished and exalted them by having taken to do with them.

We know, many of us know, how death makes a loved one sacred, how words which were common when they were spoken, become treasured memories when the voice is still. We know how we blame ourselves and beat our

breasts when we recall a word which we once upon a time spoke hastily towards one whom death has now removed from us. It is expedient *for us* that they whom we love should go away: for with all our love, there are depths and significances in them which we cannot see, until we see them out of the tenderness and desolation of our hearts and in the light that is far off.

If our hearts feel the spell of a person even more keenly, if we see him more truly when death has taken him from us, what Influence must Jesus have acquired for His followers, when, after the consternation of the Cross, they looked back!

We can trace the very shades of feeling through which the hearts of the disciples passed from that day of their desolation to the time when, under the illumination of the Holy Ghost, the iron bands of sorrow were burst in sunder from their souls, and they behaved

like men "drunk with truth stagnant within them."

First, their amazement at the ignominious death, when, in the bitterness of their disappointment, some of them even spoke angrily of their Lord. Then, as the tumult of their spirits subsided somewhat, the Face of Christ began to come near to them. It is at this stage that we find them meeting together and speaking of Him whom they had loved and lost.

We see the disciples at this stage of their recovery, in the story of the two on the way to Emmaus. They talked together of all the things which had happened, and "they were sad." And One drew near to them and entered into speech with them. And we learn the reason for their perplexity and sorrow. Why had Christ died? "We trusted that it had been He which should have redeemed Israel." "But," pleaded the stranger, "ought not the Christ to have suffered these things

and to enter into His Glory?" And He showed them from their own Scriptures, in which they trusted, that to such a life of suffering and to such a death the Saviour had been ordained. Jesus taught the disciples (as He has taught the world) that it is the Glory of God to stoop, to suffer, in order that He may redeem. This new thought began to contend with their doubt and grief, as the dawn thrills through the darkness. And their hearts burned within them as new heavens and a new earth came into being under the power of this new Conception of Deity.

At length the Stranger sat at meat with them. He took bread and blessed it and brake and gave to them. And even as they were taking the bread from His hands, they remembered the night of the last Supper. And they looked up to see if it was really He; but behold, He was gone, leaving it, as always, to their own awakened hearts to find the com-

pleted proof that it was indeed He. With the great news singing in their souls they returned to Jerusalem and found the other disciples gathered together. "We have seen the Lord," they whispered. And the others answered: "The Lord is risen, indeed, and hath appeared unto Simon."

Thus, over the hearts of those who had known Him, the Face of Jesus kept coming, persuading them of His divineness; and the voice of Jesus began to arise increasingly out of the depths of their experience, bidding them believe as utterly as they felt they were being urged to. And they kept their hearts true with prayer until at last the Holy Ghost—the true presence of God, not to be explained but to be received by hearts that yearn for Christ—the Holy Ghost came upon them, ending all their misgivings, confirming all their dim and difficult hopes, settling them and sealing them in that great venture of faith by which they de-

clared that He who had been crucified, dead, and buried, was none other than the true Son of God who is alive for evermore.

My task, for the present, and limited as it was by the opportunity, is done. But before I close, I should like at least to try to make this supreme belief more actual and credible to ourselves. I remember a sentence—I think it is from Richard Holt Hutton of the “Spectator,” whose service to faith should be honoured everywhere. It is to the effect that it is a great thing when we cannot only believe what we do believe, but can also *imagine* it. I do hold that it is possible not only to believe in Jesus Christ as the Incarnate Son of God, but also to *imagine* it, to *think* it, so that it shall be, so to speak, *visible* to the eye of our mind. I should like, then, in closing, to show how the doctrine of Christ’s Eternal Existence in God is not *opposed* to our highest reason, how it does not paralyse our minds when we try to

grasp it; how this doctrine is no curious and baffling irrelevance to us as thinking beings, but a mighty Revelation which, once made, the soul of man may reasonably embrace. I should like, also, to show how this doctrine of Christ's Eternal Existence in God has probabilities and considerations in its favour sufficient to assure and persuade those who already for personal reasons do worship Jesus Christ as Lord. For, remember, a man may believe in something which, nevertheless, is a mystery and not to be discovered by his own unaided reason. We believe, for example, in "life," though we cannot define "life." We believe in "the Soul," although the keenest research has not discovered an organ in man which is entirely spiritual, and independent of its bodily circumstances as we believe the soul in some way to be. And so of many things equally mysterious. Indeed, when one comes to think of it, it is with regard to the *mysterious* things

in the midst of which we live—the Uniformity of Nature, the Reasonableness of life—that somehow we are most confident. We are always acting as though these things were true, although, *that they are true* is simply a matter of faith, and can never really be proved. Indeed, one is beginning to see that the very things by which we live cannot be proved, cannot be demonstrated to the intellectual eye: but they can be *verified*, the hazard of faith by which we adopt them can be corroborated. Just so with regard to this supreme matter;—I may be persuaded that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and was and is in God eternally, for no reason which could pass as proof with reluctant or hostile minds, but from the inner persuasion of my whole being which, once persuaded, finds corroborations and verifications everywhere.

Well, then, in the first place, we all believe that every good gift and every perfect

gift cometh down from above, from the Father of Lights. We must believe that all human intelligence and virtue have their source in God, and that the holiest Love which ever appeared on this earth was, as it were, a gleam from the life of God. If there has ever appeared on this earth a holy and beautiful soul, it must all have been in God before it came to light here. We must believe that, if we believe really in God. He cannot be conceived as inferior to any of His creatures or to all of them. Thus, the good Spirit of every life that has been lived had its Source and Home in the bosom of God. Every life of holy love had its pulse and throb from the Great Heart beyond the Veil!

Looking, then, at Jesus Christ merely as one of God's creatures, as One who *lived*, we say that all the grace and beauty which He manifested while on earth, was in God, and must have been in God before it came to light. As

water will not rise higher than its source, so no life can go beyond,—in its conception or in its achievement—what lay within the bosom of its Creator. Jesus Christ, then, in the beauty and holiness of His Person, in all His pity and passion of love, was potentially *somewhere*, and must have been potentially *somewhere* before He appeared on this human scene. Now, that *Somewhere* is God! I mean to say, that there must have been in God room for Christ. There must have been a *fulness* in God such as could spare Christ, else Christ had never come. The effect cannot be greater than the cause. Christ, therefore, must have been in God potentially. The power to give Christ to the world—that must have been in God from all eternity. The Spirit of Jesus Christ must for ever have throbbed in the bosom of God, ready to be revealed in the fulness of the times. As the Evangelist puts it: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the

Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God."

Now, there are many who are willing to admit so much who are not willing to admit more. There are many who understand such a sentence as "in the beginning was the Word" to mean that from all eternity God had designed to reveal Himself to man, that the *thought* of Christ, the *idea* of Christ had always been in the bosom of God. But to admit that the *thought or idea* of Christ was always present to God is to admit that always, from all eternity, Christ was an object of thought for God, —that from the beginning, *One* existed for God, not Himself, yet not to be conceived apart from Himself. But, I repeat, simply because we must believe that "every good gift and every perfect gift cometh down from above, from the Father of Lights," we cannot stop short of believing that Jesus Christ came out from God, and that every grace for which we

adore Jesus Christ must have been hid in God from before all time.

To put the matter in another light:—Now that Jesus Christ has appeared, we are compelled, just as the Apostles were compelled, to revise and to abandon our purely *deistic* conception of God. Our conception of God must have room within itself for the entire Personality—the spirit, the soul, the love, the tears—of Jesus Christ. God may no longer be conceived by us as the Solitary Sovereign of the worlds. He must no longer be conceived as mere *Might* or *Force*. He must no longer be thought of as merely “a great millionaire in suns and stars,” who might be excused for not noticing such beings as we are. It is no honour to God now to say that He might well have neglected us. That is all past, now that Christ has come. We must now conceive of God as that *One* who, from all eternity, intended Christ; as that *One* who, from all

eternity, was pondering some way whereby He might stoop to the rescue and recovery of man: "that *He* loved us *before* we loved Him."

I do not suppose for one moment that faith can ever be compelled by reason, or that much good is *bound* to come of trying to convince people on matters of religion against their will. We cannot in matters of faith* do a great deal for each other. No man can give his faith to another any more than he can give another his imagination or his private history. The deepest is unspeakable: a man's faith is the blessed inclination of his whole being, urged by its own reasons and by the Holy Ghost. What I have been trying to do is to show, as I find it good for myself to see, that once you have been led by the necessities of your own

* Cf. my Introduction to "Pilgrims in the Region of Faith;" also "Guidance from Robert Browning in Matters of Faith." Chap. I.—"The Case for Belief."

life, of your own thoughts, and your own feelings, to lean with all your weight and weakness upon Jesus Christ as upon the breast of God,—there is really no contradiction between such a faith and your reason: that they can both dwell together in unity. It is all a great mystery: but there must be mystery with any conception of God. What I feel is, that to believe in Christ as eternally with God is no harder than to believe in God in eternal solitude. In the deepest hour of His earthly life, Jesus poured out His soul and said, “Father, glorify Thou me with Thine own self with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was,”—and in my own truest hours, when so far as I can bear it I am alone—those words come home to me as a Revelation which is not to be discussed in the language of the schools,—they come home to me as great music comes home to me, provoking no definite question, but baptizing my spirit in unworldliness. They

light up this world with such a meaning and such a prospect that I say here or nowhere I have come upon *the truth!*

I close with a consideration which is not without force for certain minds. Unless we know God in the Face of Jesus Christ we do not know Him at all. Nay, in that case, we know nothing for certain. You go to *Nature* for some conception of God. But Nature only illustrates and confirms the belief in God or the denial of God with which you approach her and examine her processes. 'Tis a fine hour, indeed, the dawn, and it quickens the piety and hope of all honourable souls to see the sun burst fresh upon the world. But there is more than dawn in any day: there is twilight, there is darkness; and if the morning brings joy to man's soul, the night by the same law should bring despair. There are beautiful things in this world, indeed, things on which noble souls might base a genial doctrine concerning the

Author of all. There are twittering birds nesting under the eaves of charming homes. But in this world there are terrible things likewise. There are sheer precipices which crush the soul of man, there are yawning depths of mountains which, had man no other ground for faith, would pour contempt upon his hopes. There is fire, there is tempest, there are diseases, hatreds afflicting man. There is the un pitying warfare among beasts. There are icebergs, tornadoes, sharks, and all the terrors of the intolerable sea. And a faith which would erect itself upon nature's humane and gentle things must suffer shipwreck upon these sinister aspects.

Or you go to *history* for some clue to the mystery of things, for some light on "what God and man is." But history shows disorder just as resolutely as she manifests order, and deplorable backsliding as unmistakably as progress. Your massacres of S. Bartholomew

and downfall-of-Polands would, if we had nothing else to go by, give a sad and heart-breaking guidance concerning Him who is in all and through all and over all. In history there are as many proofs of cruelty as there are of kindness, of chance as of providence, of evil as of good.

Yes, it is simply the fact that man, if he is to bear up for ever against life and death, and the multitudinous evil in things, and still more if he is to become himself the Apostle of the Good, undertaking trials and self-denials, his own strength meanwhile growing feebler, the grave awaiting him at the last, must have some sign entirely above change, a point to stand upon clear of the vortex of his warfare, something like a rock above the ebb and flow of things, some Revelation in short of what God is in Himself. "If I looked into a mirror," said Newman, "and did *not* see my face, I should have the sort of feeling which actually

comes upon me while I look into this living busy world and see no Reflexion of its Creator."

And so, in the face of every sad and terrible conclusion to which the human mind might be driven, as man kept looking without deeper instruction upon the life of races and nations, and upon the lots of individual men, God has sent His Son, placing Him in the highway of human history, where the continents, the civilizations, the colours meet, that He might save the soul in man from despair and confusion, and weariness and shame and death! "Truly, if it had not been the Lord who was on our side . . . the stream had gone over our Soul."

In a most pathetic passage in Plato, we are told that, in face of the great darkness and mystery which are round about us in this world, there is nothing for a man to do except to take the best advice he can get as to how to live, and then to take his chance, like a man

crossing the lonely sea upon a raft, "not without risk unless," the passage concludes, "we can find some vessel more safe and solid, *some word from God* on which we may make this passage." And still there is no victory over the world, no triumphant answer to its monotonous challenge, no personal and unfaltering ground for hope, for living greatly and for praise, except by a humble and reverent confidence, nurtured on the New Testament facts, breathing the New Testament atmosphere of spiritual miracle and wonder, that in Jesus Christ we have the authentic voice from out the silence, that in Jesus Christ there dwells for us the fulness of the Godhead in bodily form!

Lord, open Thou our eyes—that we may see how Awful was and is our need of the Coming of Thy Holy Son; and that we may praise Thee for Thine overflowing answer to the cry of that need, world without end. Amen.

